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WILDLIFE SERVICES—MASSACHUSETTS

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Massachusetts

Massachusetts is heavily populated and ecologically diverse. On a daily basis, residents, industry professionals, organizations, and agencies call upon the Massachusetts Wildlife Services (WS) program for help and expertise in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, property, and critical natural resources from damage or threats caused by wildlife. In response WS provides technical assistance and implements biologically, environmentally, and socially sound wildlife damage management efforts in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

Specific projects conducted by Massachusetts WS include, alleviating wildlife hazards at airports; reducing the threat of rabies through oral rabies vaccination (ORV); reducing threats to human health and safety and property damage from Canada geese; reducing wildlife disease threats to livestock; and protecting critical natural resources from various types of wildlife damage.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting civilian and military passengers and aircraft from wildlife collisions
- Protecting property and public health and safety from conflicts caused by Canada geese
- Protecting human and animal health from disease threats such as rabies
- Managing damage caused by pigeons, starlings, and blackbirds
- Alleviating depredation of State and Federally protected shorebirds

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Massachusetts:

- Managing and evaluating grass height at airports for optimum aircraft safety while preserving conditions to also benefit protected grassland birds
- Evaluating potential threats and hazards caused by the presence of snow buntings or similar birds at airports
- Research evaluation of wildlife rabies transmission and collaborative operational field application of rabies control techniques
- Evaluating the level of attractiveness of trash transfer stations to wildlife based on design types
- Managing bird presence at landfill facilities



Protecting Agricultural Resources—Although human population densities are increasing, agriculture remains economically and socially important to Massachusetts. WS continues to provide wildlife damage management expertise to a highly diversified agricultural industry in a variety of landscapes. These include vegetable, fruit, dairy, turf, ornamental, aquaculture, and livestock production enterprises. These operations occur in urban, suburban, and rural settings, and produce locally consumed and exported crops.

Massachusetts WS personnel conduct seasonal projects in collaboration with the University of Massachusetts Extension System to manage starling contamination of feed and water at dairy farms, which can cause salmonella infections in cattle. Cattle infected with salmonella may abort their calves, slow down or stop feeding, lose weight, and reduce milk production, causing great concern to producers in the dairy industry. In addition to cost savings from the reduction of contaminated and consumed feed losses, dairy and feed lot farmers who participate in this WS program report improvements in the quality of their cattle and milk production.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Wildlife collisions with aircraft cost U.S. civil aviation more than \$500 million annually and pose a hazard to flight crews, passengers, and aircraft. WS National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts research from its Sandusky, OH field station to reduce wildlife hazards to aviation and to reduce risks to air passengers. In Massachusetts, WS biologists provide training, wildlife hazard assessments, and direct wildlife management assistance at State airports through partnerships with airport management, State agencies, and other Federal agencies. In fiscal year (FY) 2004, WS conducted cooperative programs at three military airports and three State airports. During the same year, the program also conducted technical consultations at five civilian

airports. In addition, Massachusetts WS conducts up to two wildlife hazard management workshops for airport personnel each year based on demand.

Protecting Human Health & Safety from Rabies—Since 2001 WS continues to support the Cape Cod Oral Rabies Vaccination (CCORV) program in southeastern Massachusetts in collaboration with Tufts University, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and the Barnstable County Department of Health and the Environment. This project began in 1994 and was designed to prevent the spread of rabies to Cape Cod, a heavily populated tourist destination south of Boston. Cooperative activities include oral rabies vaccine (ORV) bait distribution, surveillance activities, training, and small-scale studies.

In response to the Cape Cod rabies outbreak in March 2004, WS led CCORV cooperators in a 13 day trap-vaccinate-release (TVR) project on Cape Cod (490 raccoons and 18 skunks vaccinated). The TVR task force included WS National Rabies and Wildlife Diseases program staff from eight states. Additionally 54,120 ORV baits were distributed by the CCORV cooperative, including aerial distribution of 2,386 baits by U.S. Coast Guard helicopter covering areas inaccessible by road vehicles.

Enhanced rabies surveillance and other rabies-related data collection continue to be important to the CCORV program. In addition to rabies suspect specimens submitted by CCORV cooperators, WS has directly submitted 181 specimens since the beginning of the Cape Cod rabies epizootic.

Wildlife Disease Management—To increase preparedness for emergency disease response the Massachusetts WS program has enhanced collaboration with USDA, Veterinary Services (VS) and several state and local health agencies. Several interagency meetings and table-top exercises have been conducted, which have significantly improved communications and strategies for responding to potential disease emergencies.

Protecting Federally Endangered Piping Plovers—Massachusetts WS has assisted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in managing coyote predation on federally protected piping plovers, as well as common and roseate terns which nest on Monomoy Island off the coast of Massachusetts. WS and the USFWS working together under a cooperative interagency service agreement, and using a strategy of integrated methods, have been able reduce coyotes predation and enhance nesting success of these protected bird species.

Protecting Multiple Resources from Canada Goose Damage—For the past 30-years, Canada goose populations have increased in Massachusetts and continue to be a major wildlife problem. Many

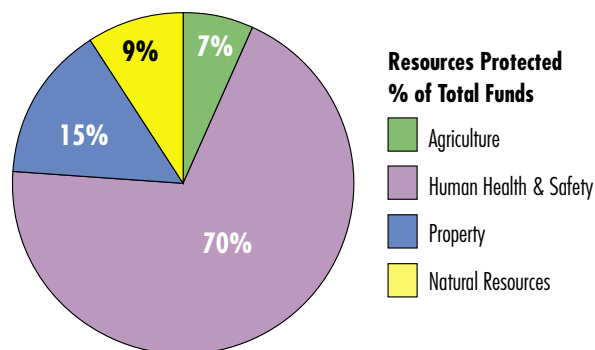
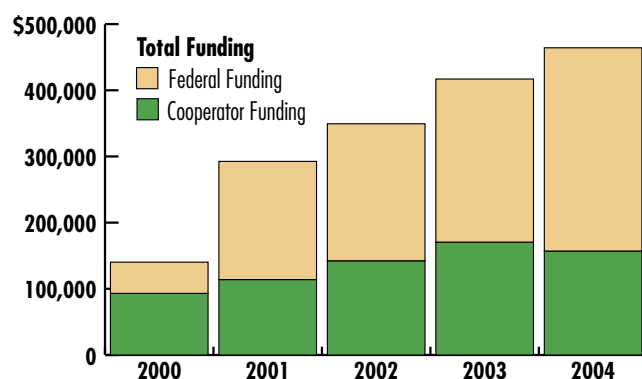
of the traditional management methods are becoming limited in their effectiveness as goose populations continue to grow. Massachusetts WS recommends the use of integrated wildlife damage management where several effective methods are used in combination to control goose damage. Examples include the combination use of habitat management, exclusion, harassment, and repellants. The National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) is working to develop more socially acceptable and effective management methods. Massachusetts WS specialists currently conduct integrated programs with towns and homeowner associations to reduce successful local goose reproduction. In FY 2004, Massachusetts WS conducted 21 consultations and resource loss evaluations regarding Canada geese and provided recommendations associated with application for USFWS depredation permits at no charge.

Looking to the Future

WS continues to provide citizens of Massachusetts with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a variety of wildlife conflicts through cooperatively funded wildlife damage management activities. These will include (1) preventing the spread of wildlife-borne diseases rabies, tularemia, salmonella, giardia, and E. coli, (2) meeting new wildlife damage management challenges to the dynamic Massachusetts agricultural industry, (3) continuing to improve strategies for reducing wildlife hazards at airports.

Massachusetts Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and Local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.



Major Cooperators

- Individual Massachusetts Agricultural Producers
- Massachusetts Division of Agricultural Resources
- Massport Airport Operations
- Westover Air Reserve Base
- Otis Air National Guard Base
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment
- Tufts University Animal Hospital
- Multiple Town Public and Residential Develop Offices for Canada Goose Control

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